

# NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

## REVERE BEACH RESERVATION

Page 1

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

### 1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Revere Beach Reservation

Other Name/Site Number: Revere Beach

### 2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Revere Beach Boulevard, Eliot Circle to Northern Circle

Not for publication:\_\_\_

City/Town: Revere

Vicinity:\_\_\_

State: MA County: Suffolk Code: 023

Zip Code: 02151

### 3. CLASSIFICATION

#### Ownership of Property

Private: \_\_\_

Public-Local:\_\_\_

Public-State: X

Public-Federal:\_\_\_

#### Category of Property

Building(s): \_\_\_

District: \_\_\_

Site: X

Structure: \_\_\_

Object: \_\_\_

#### Number of Resources within Property

##### Contributing

1

1

10

\_\_\_

12

##### Noncontributing

2 buildings

\_\_\_ sites

1 structures

26 objects

29 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 12

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 2**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this \_\_\_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Certifying Official\_\_\_\_\_  
Date\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Commenting or Other Official\_\_\_\_\_  
Date\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau**5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is:

☐ Entered in the National Register☐ Determined eligible for the National Register☐ Determined not eligible for the National Register☐ Removed from the National Register☐ Other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 3**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

Historic: Recreation and Culture Sub: Outdoor recreation

Current: Recreation and Culture Sub: Outdoor recreation

**7. DESCRIPTION**

Architectural Classification:

Materials:

Foundation:	Granite, masonry
Walls:	Brick-masonry, wood-shingle
Roof:	Tile, slate
Other:	Metal-cast iron

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 4**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.****Summary**

Revere Beach Reservation is a unit of the Metropolitan Park System, which is owned and operated by the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC), an agency of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The reservation is located along the Atlantic Ocean in the City of Revere, about six miles northeast of downtown Boston. It is a linear district that is roughly bounded on the south by Charles Eliot Circle, on the west by Revere Beach Boulevard, on the north by Northern Circle and on the east by Broad Sound of the Atlantic Ocean. The district contains twelve contributing resources:<sup>1</sup>

1 site: Revere Beach;  
1 building: the Revere Beach police station;  
10 structures: Revere Beach Boulevard, a bandstand and eight beach pavilions.

**Revere Beach** (contributing)

The most prominent feature of the Revere Beach Reservation is Revere Beach itself, a three-mile long stretch of improved, open beach that has been continuously owned and operated by the Commonwealth as a public beach since 1895. The beach extends in a wide crescent between two seaside residential neighborhoods of the city of Revere: Beachmont, to the south of Eliot Circle, and Point of Pines, to the north of Northern Circle. Use of the beach is restricted to non-vehicular recreational activities such as swimming, sunbathing and strolling.

Prior to its commercial and recreational development, Revere Beach was a natural barrier sand dune running from Winthrop on the south to the mouths of the Saugus and Point of Pines Rivers to the north. According to a 1971 report from the engineering department of MDC, the dune protected the expansive salt marshes to the west, and was itself protected on the seaward side by the rocky outcropping of Nahant. The position of Nahant protected the dune from the full thrust of the ocean, which prevented a tall dune from accumulating. Beginning in 1839, the beach saw the construction of hotels, shops, warehouses and residences on the landward side of the dune. A narrow gauge railroad from Boston was built on the crest of the dune in 1875, soon to be followed by further development on the seaward side of the dune. Such development divided the dune and caused the subsequent obliteration of its landward side, leaving only a gently sloping beach to the seaward side. In 1895, as part of Charles Eliot's plan for Revere Beach Reservation, the park commission moved the railroad several hundred yards to the west, and replaced it with Revere Beach Boulevard, which serves as the current western boundary of the beach. The boundaries of the beach today are the same as those boundaries set out by Eliot in the original plan. Today, a concrete retaining wall, two-foot-to-three-foot-high, runs the length of the crest of the beach to protect the boulevard and its bordering buildings from storm damage. A retaining wall was not part of Eliot's original plan. His concerns that it would contribute to the beach's erosion have been born out, and renewal of the sand is a continuing maintenance issue, especially at the narrowest point of the beach at the center of the crescent. In 1898, the park commission built a relatively short length of wall to protect the center section of the boulevard. They extended the wall to the south in 1915 and to the north in 1931. The current wall dates to the

---

<sup>1</sup> The National Register (NR) nomination for this property included 12 contributing and 28 non contributing resources within this property. The Superintendent's House on the South side of Eliot Circle which contributes to the NR site, does not retain a high degree of integrity and is not included in the NHL resource count or boundary. One additional resource, the seawall was included in the NHL resource noncontributing count that was not counted in the NR nomination. The NR boundary does not include Revere Beach Boulevard, which is counted as a contributing structure in this nomination.

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 5**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1960s, with major repairs made to it in the 1980s. The retaining wall is a noncontributing structure in the district.

The beach itself is devoid of all vestiges of former development above the surface of the sand and seaward of the current retaining wall. It is a gently sloping white sand beach, rising at its western edge to about 15 feet above sea level. The entire beach comprises approximately 60 acres. It is widest at the southern tip of the crescent where it reaches approximately 400 feet at mean high tide. At the center, it is approximately 100 feet wide at mean high tide.

**Revere Beach Boulevard** (contributing)

Originally called a "driveway," Revere Beach Boulevard occupies the right-of-way vacated by Eliot's planned removal of a train line westward off the crest of the beach. It runs from Eliot Circle on the south northwards to Carey Circle. Plans for the "Drive" show a 40' wide roadway bounded by concrete curbs and gutters. The "Promenade" on the beach (east) side was 20' wide with a "Walk" on the western side of the Boulevard. The Walk, Drive, and Promenade were built on fill along the extent of the reservation. Historic photographs show that the Drive and Promenade were made from compacted earth "loam." Today, the surface of Revere Beach Boulevard is a composite asphalt, and the Promenade is surfaced with concrete.

**Bandstand and Pavilions** (contributing)

Along the crest of Revere Beach, at the seaward side of Revere Beach Boulevard, stand a bandstand and eight long pavilions. The Commission built pavilions in pairs between Eliot Circle and Oak Island Street. The bandstand lies between the pavilions in the southernmost pair. William Austin of the Boston firm of Stickney & Austin designed these structures as generous, open gazebos. Each pair of pavilions is referred to locally by its location. Moving from south to north, the first two are called the Bandstand Pavilions. The second two are the Bathhouse Pavilions, named for their location across the boulevard from the Revere Beach Bathhouse, which was demolished in 1962. The third two are the Revere Street Pavilions and the fourth two are the Oak Island Street Pavilions. The third and fourth pairs are named for the streets that intersect the boulevard north of the bathhouse. The bandstand, the bandstand pavilions, and the bathhouse pavilions were built in 1897; the Revere Street and Oak Island Street pavilions were built in 1905.

All eight pavilions are set several feet above the beach on poured concrete foundations within wide bastions in the seawall. They are set lengthwise, parallel to the seawall. Entry to the pavilions is made through the open narrow ends, up a short flight of granite stairs. Some of the steps have been replaced by short ramps for handicapped access. Each pavilion consists of a simple, hipped roof supported by cast iron columns spaced at twenty-foot intervals. The Bandstand Pavilions each measure six bays in length, for a total of 120 feet each. The remaining shelters are all longer by an additional bay, or 140 feet each. At the Bathhouse Pavilions, the center bay on the seaward side of the structure projects three feet over the former entrance to the tunnels that ran under these pavilions and under the boulevard into the former bathhouse. The Metropolitan District Commission filled these tunnels and capped the openings with concrete as part of the sea wall.

The roofs are constructed of dark gray slate laid on wood boarding, supported by wooden rafters, which are in turn supported by a steel box-beam assemblage set on top of cast iron columns. Roof flashing is copper. Steel angle trusses at each column line further reinforce the roof. Decorative ends of the rafters project three feet beyond the steel box-beam assemblage. The

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 6**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

columns are round for the lower two-thirds of their length, at which point a capital terminates the round section, and are hexagonal in shape at the upper third. The tops of the columns are decorated with iron brackets consisting of simple scrolls and circles.

On the seaward side of the pavilions, simple iron balustrades set into the foundation originally connected the bays. However, the Metropolitan District Commission extended the seawall above the road in the 1960s, poured concrete around the bases of the columns and directly over the balustrades, incorporating those features into the seawall. On the landward side, the bays are still connected by iron balustrades, although all are modern replacements.

In 1994, the MDC undertook a major restoration on the pavilions to correct previously unintended damage and deterioration caused by the severe blizzard of 1978. Total roof replacements were necessary on the bath house pavilions and on the first of the Revere Street pavilions. The MDC replaced seven iron columns on the second bath house pavilion. Major slate replacements and flashing repairs were necessary on the other Revere Street pavilion and on the Oak Island Street pavilions. Most of the decorative iron brackets were also replaced at this time. All of the original brackets were removed and twenty-eight pairs were salvaged for use on the Bandstand Pavilions. Reproduction brackets were reinstalled at the other pavilions.

The Bandstand, located between the first pair of pavilions, is built as an octagon, twenty feet across and thirty-four feet high to the peak of the roof. It is constructed of the same materials as the pavilions, but in a somewhat more elaborate style. The roof is constructed as a two-step ogee, bell-cast surface covered with slate. Rafter ends project beyond the metal box-beam supports below. The underside of the roof is hidden from view by a ceiling composed of beaded boarding. Columns similar to the pavilion columns, with the exception that the capitals have an applied swag motif support the roof structure. The applied decorative filigree at the upper third of the column is more elaborate than the brackets found at the pavilions. The roof is topped off with a fanciful copper lyre, with acroteria at the hip terminations. The original brick foundation of the bandstand, rising six feet above the sidewalk, has been pargetted with concrete. During the 1994 restoration, a reproduction of the original iron stair to the bandstand replaced a masonry stair from an earlier renovation.

Also during the restoration, the MDC installed a reproduction post clock between the two bath house pavilions. This clock replaced a well-known clock that had stood at that site facing the bathhouse until the bathhouse was demolished in 1962. A modern poured concrete sculpture shaped in the form of stylized waves was installed between the Revere Street pavilions. Six reproduction lampposts were installed around each of the paired pavilions. The clock, the sculpture and the twenty-four lampposts are counted as noncontributing objects.

Two noncontributing buildings also stand at the crest of the beach on the seaward side of the boulevard. Both are sanitary facilities containing men and women's restrooms. The first, built in 1935, stands south of the Bandstand Pavilions at Shirley Avenue; the second, built in 1937, stands north of the Oak Island Street Pavilions. Both buildings are brick and are built in the colonial revival style, although they are of little architectural interest and are somewhat incongruous to Eliot's original design for the beach. Although the sanitary facilities are more than fifty years old, their dates fall outside the period of significance for this nomination. They are considered as non contributing resources. Except for the seawall, there are no structures on the seaward side of the boulevard for the remaining mile and a half of the reservation beyond the Oak Island Sanitary Facility.

**MDC Police Station (contributing)**

The Revere Beach Police Station is the dominant architectural feature on Revere Beach. It stands prominently above the beach, facing the ocean, on the western side of Revere Beach Boulevard,

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 7**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

approximately one-quarter mile south of the intersection with Revere Street. The station was built in 1899 and was used by the MDC police force until 1992, when the MDC police merged with the state police. Today the state police lease the building from the MDC. The MDC completely renovated the interior of the building in the 1980s.

Designed by Austin, the police station, like the grand Revere Beach Bathhouse, which stood several hundred yards to the south, is in the Italian Renaissance style. The Bathhouse, built in 1897, was demolished in 1962. Today, the police station is isolated and somewhat out of context amid parking lots and a long narrow strip of green space reclaimed from earlier development along the western edge of Revere Beach Boulevard. The police station fronts Revere Beach Boulevard for 168 feet; its horizontal mass divides into three distinct sections. A brief hipped roof section leads up to a high tower at the south end; a tall front gable dominates the center; and a long hipped roof section extends at the north end. Austin faced the building in red and gray tapestry brick with a granite base course. He covered its elaborate roof line in molded green terra cotta tiles. The first floor of the building begins several steps above grade over a full-length, partially exposed basement. All windows in the building are true-divided wooden sash of various shapes and configurations.

The tower is the most imposing feature of the police station, rising to a height of 62 feet above Revere Beach Boulevard. The vertical shaft is divided into three sections, each of which is separated by a granite belt course. The base rises through the building façade to about half way up the tower. On the first floor, the tower contains a single, narrow arched window that has granite keystone and impost at the brick arch. Below the belt course of this first section is a pair of small rectangular windows on each of the four sides of the tower above the roof of the main building. The second section of the tower contains a single arched window, matching that on the first floor, on each of the four sides. The top section of the tower contains an observation deck. On the east façade of the observation deck, looking out to sea, and the south side, looking toward Boston, are double arched openings. Granite columns and low granite balustrades separate these openings. The north and west façades of the observation deck each contain a single arched opening, both with granite balustrades. The arches of the observation deck originally were open to the elements but have since been enclosed with plate glass behind the balustrades. A decorative brick cornice molded into intertwining arches encircles the top of the tower. A peaked roof with overhanging eaves caps the tower. In 1980, the MDC placed at the peak of the tower roof a renowned copper codfish weathervane that had graced the cupola of the original Revere Beach bathhouse. The codfish is six feet long.

A front gable rising two stories above the boulevard characterizes the center section of the police station. The brick façade of the building rises above the gable roof line to a granite capped parapet. Beneath the granite coping of the parapet is a decorative brick cornice that follows the lines of the gable and matches the cornice on the tower. The first floor of this gabled section has an arcaded façade, containing three arched window openings with granite sills, keystones and impost. The second floor of this section contains a single monumental ocular window, divided into quarter-circle panes by wooden muntins. The two top quarter-circles are hinged at the arc and open out as awning sash.

The northern section of the building continues the arcaded façade of the gable section. The first two arched bays of this section form an entry portico, with the main door several steps above grade within the second bay. The inner façade of the portico contains three arched windows. The outer façade continues beyond the portico with two additional arched windows and an arched door opening. The arched door opening has been bricked in with compatible red brick. The façade then projects into a bay window with a three-sided shed roof. Each of the three planes of the bay contains an arched window.

The original façade, as completed in 1899, ended at this bay. An addition was added to the north end of the building in 1910, continuing the façade by an additional six bays. Austin designed the

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 8**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

addition to blend with the original façade, using matching tapestry brick, with the ridge of the hipped roof on the addition slightly below that of the original roof. The six bays of the addition contain first a small ocular window followed by two arched windows, then a repeat of this pattern. The second ocular window surmounts an arched door opening that also has been bricked in.

**Other Noncontributing Resources**

Two sanitary facilities (at Shirley Avenue and Oak Island Street) were constructed during the mid-1930s. These buildings were not part of Eliot's design for the reservation and were built after the period of significance.

The concrete seawall that runs along the eastern edge of the promenade at the crest of Revere Beach, built in the 1960s and was not part of Eliot's design.

There are twenty-four reproduction lampposts (six at each pair of pavilions) and a reproduction post clock at Bath House Pavilions. A concrete sculpture installed in the 1990s at the Oak Island Pavilions also does not contribute to the property.

**Archaeological Description**

The presence of prehistoric and Contact Period Native American sites has been documented in the district and a high potential for additional sites exists. Two prehistoric sites have been recorded in the general area (within one mile) of Revere Beach, both of which are either located on the proposed district property or may extend into it. One site, 19-SU-1, is located approximately midway along the nominated length of the beach. That site, a burial site, was excavated by amateurs in the mid to late nineteenth-century and is reported to have been in the sand at Revere Beach. Little information survives for this site beyond the associated artifacts which have been documented in amateur publications. The site apparently contained several richly furnished Contact and Middle Woodland Period graves which included copper and ceramic vessels, smoking pipes, beads, pestles, faunal remains and human remains. The second burial site, 19-SU-2, is located at the southern extent of the nominated property on Crescent Beach in the rear of the State Bathhouse. Little additional information survives for this site, although it may have been excavated in the 1870s, at the same time as site 19-SU-1. Several landowner codes are also listed for the Revere Beach locale in the Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth on file at the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Landowner codes indicate general provenance for artifacts when specific site locations are not known. Five separate landowner codes, three of which are associated with burials, are listed for the Revere Beach area for artifacts collected during the late nineteenth-century. Environmental characteristics of the district and documented site locations for similar areas elsewhere in Massachusetts also indicate a high potential for locating prehistoric sites in the district. Much of the district is level to moderately sloped, sandy and excessively drained, part of a barrier beach which protects the salt marshes on the landward side of the beach. Campsites and special purpose type sites may be present in the area, which focus on resource procurement within a marine related ecosystem, habitation and ceremonialism. These types of sites have been documented in similar environmental locations elsewhere in Massachusetts such as Sandy Neck in Barnstable and along Plum Island Sound in coastal Essex County. Given the above information, the size of the district (approximately 60 acres) and the characteristics of barrier beach formation, a high potential exists for the recovery of prehistoric sites in the district.



**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 9**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

A high potential also exists for the recovery of historic archaeological resources in the district. Documented historic period land use of the district begins in the early to mid-nineteenth century with early recreational use of the area. Earlier use may, however, be present related to fishery activities along the beach, possibly dating to the early 1600s. Most potential historic period sites in the Revere Beach area date to 1839 and later as the beach developed into a resort area when the Eastern Railroad was built north of Boston. Archaeological evidence of the railroad may survive in the area of Revere Beach Boulevard, the original location for the railroad prior to being moved to the west in 1895. Archaeological evidence including pilings and footings may also survive on the beach and in coastal areas from the 1700-foot-long Great Ocean Pier originally located at the south end of the beach. The pier provided a terminus for steamships arriving with tourists for the beach. Most historic period archaeological resources in the Revere Beach locale should result from the wide variety of privately owned bath houses, hotels, restaurants, dance halls, saloons and amusement park facilities which were built seaward from the railroad to the beach. Photographs of Revere Beach from the 1890s illustrate many of these structures extending down to the high tide line. Design plans for state development of the beach in the 1890s identified 103 privately owned structures, which required relocation or demolition, among which 81 structures were located on the beach. Structural survivals and related occupational features (trash areas, privies, and wells) may exist from many of these buildings. Archaeological evidence may also survive from structures related to state development of the Revere Beach area. Structural evidence may survive from a tunnel, which originally extended from the center bay on the seaward side of the Bathhouse Pavilions under the pavilions and under the boulevard into the former bathhouse. The tunnel has been filled and capped with concrete, forming part of the existing seawall. Structural remains may also survive from the Revere Beach Bathhouse (1897) which was demolished in 1962.

**Superintendent's House** (Contributing to NR, outside NHL boundary)

William Austin built the Revere Beach Superintendent's House in 1905, his last design to be built at the reservation. It is located at One Eliot Circle at the southern entrance to the reservation, where Revere Beach Parkway intersects with Revere Beach Boulevard. Built in the Italian Renaissance style, the Superintendent's House complements Austin's earlier Mediterranean-inspired designs for the Revere Beach bathhouse and the Revere Beach Police Station farther north on Revere Beach Boulevard.

The building today is a modest two story rectangular mass, three bays across, with a low-pitched hipped roof. Simple wooden brackets support overhanging eaves. Windows are one-over-one wood sash. Two narrower windows flank the window at the center bay of the second story. A semi-octagonal, one-story front porch shelters the front entrance at the center bay. Four wooden Tuscan columns support the flat roof of the porch; exposed beams extend beyond the wooden fascia. The building is faced with wooden shakes, painted white, and the roof is covered with asphalt shingles.

Austin's plans, dated 1904, and early photographs at the MDC Archives show that the Superintendent's House was built as a much grander residence and that it has been ungraciously altered over the years. More characteristic of its Italian Renaissance design, the house was originally faced with concrete stucco and roofed with molded ceramic tile. A wooden belt course

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 10**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

separated the two stories. Finally, one-story, seven-foot-wide wooden porches projected from either side of the building. Like the front porch, Tuscan columns supported the flat roofs of the side porches and wooden beams extended beyond the wooden fascia. A historic photograph shows that the side porches were screened in and were sheltered by broad canvas awnings.

Despite the alterations to the exterior of the Superintendent's House, the building is considered as a contributing resource within the National Register historic district. It retains its basic rectangular massing, hipped roof, overhanging eaves, triple-wide center window, front porch and front columns. The building is no longer used as the superintendent's residence (that function was eliminated in the 1970s). Today it houses offices for the reservation staff. The building does not contribute to the NHL site and is not included within the boundary of the NHL property because it does not retain a high degree of integrity.

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 11**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION HISTORIC DISTRICT**  
**Contributing and Non Contributing Resources**

<b>Property</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Location</b>
Revere Beach	Site	1895	C	Revere Beach
Police Station	Building	1899	C	220 Revere Beach Blvd.
Revere Beach Boulevard	Structure	1895	C	Revere Beach Boulevard
Bandstand	Structure	1897	C	Revere Beach Blvd. at Beach St.
Bandstand Pavilion #1	Structure	1897	C	Revere Beach Blvd. at Beach St.
Bandstand Pavilion #2	Structure	1897	C	Revere Beach Blvd. at Beach St.
Bath House Pavilion #3	Structure	1897	C	Revere Beach Blvd. at Police Station
Bath House Pavilion #4	Structure	1897	C	Revere Beach Blvd. at Police Station
Revere Street Pavilion #5	Structure	1905	C	Revere Beach Blvd. at Revere St.
Revere Street Pavilion #6	Structure	1905	C	Revere Beach Blvd. at Revere St.
Oak Island Street Pavilion #7	Structure	1905	C	Revere Beach Blvd. at Oak Island St.
Oak Island Street Pavilion #8	Structure	1905	C	Revere Beach Blvd. at Oak Island St.
<b>Noncontributing Resources</b>				
Shirley Avenue Sanitary Facility	Building	1935	NC	Revere Beach Blvd. at Shirley Ave.
Oak Island Street Sanitary Facility	Building	1937	NC	Revere Beach Blvd. at Oak Island St.
Seawall	Structure	1960s	NC	Along Revere Beach Blvd.
Post clock (reproduction)	Object	1990s	NC	At Bath House Pavilions
Concrete sculpture	Object	1990s	NC	At Oak Island Pavilions
24 Reproduction lampposts	Objects	1990s	NC	Six at each pair of pavilions

**Included within the boundaries of the National Register property:**

Superintendent's House      Building      1905      C      1 Eliot Circle

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 12**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: X Statewide:    Locally:   

Applicable National

Register Criteria: A X B    C X D   

Criteria Considerations

(Exceptions): A    B    C    D    E    F    G   

NHL Criteria: 4

NHL Theme(s): III. Expressing Cultural Values

5. Architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design

Areas of Significance: Landscape architecture, planning

Period(s) of Significance: 1895-1905

Significant Dates: 1895, 1899, 1905

Significant Person(s): n/a

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Architect/Builder: Charles Eliot, Landscape Architect  
William D. Austin, ArchitectHistoric Contexts: XVI. Architecture  
W. Regional and Urban Planning  
5. Regional Planning  
XVII. Landscape Architecture

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 13**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.****SIGNIFICANCE**

Designed and implemented by one of the pioneers of American landscape architecture, Charles Eliot, Revere Beach Reservation in Revere, Massachusetts was not only the first ocean beach in the United States to be acquired for public recreational use but was also one of the initial components of the Metropolitan Park System, the country's first regional landscape system. Scholars have celebrated the Boston Metropolitan Park system as "the first metropolitan organization of land in the world"<sup>2</sup> and have noted specifically "Charles Eliot's success story in establishing... in 1892 the first metropolitan park system in the world."<sup>3</sup> Revere Beach is the most important and best surviving component of Eliot's work for the Metropolitan Park Commission. The period of significance extends from 1895, when the first public takings of private property on Revere Beach were executed under Eliot's guidance, to 1905, when construction of the final buildings and structures (designed by Boston Architect William D. Austin) were completed. Revere Beach qualifies for National Historic Landmark status on the basis of criterion 4 because it is an intact complex of spaces and buildings designed by one of the nation's most important landscape architects for a park system of supreme importance in the history of American landscape architecture and planning.<sup>4</sup>

Eliot, who was the chief advisor to the Metropolitan Park Commission, specifically chose Revere Beach for acquisition as a public park. His landscape design for Revere Beach Reservation is largely intact and is clearly evident in the current configuration of beach, roadway, promenade and beach side structures. His plan called for the reclamation of the beach from intense private development, stipulated the relocation of the Boston, Revere Beach & Lynn Railroad from the top of the beach and directed the placement of a boulevard and structures for bathing to emphasize the natural curve of the beach. Austin's buildings and structures were sited and built to Eliot's specifications, and, with the notable exception of a grand bathhouse that was demolished in 1962, continue to serve Revere Beach more or less in their original functions. Eliot died in 1897 at the age of 38, shortly after acquisition of Revere Beach was complete. While Eliot established the design and management principles for the development of the Metropolitan Park System, he was only able to establish definitive plans for Revere Beach before his premature death. As such, it provides the best example of Eliot's philosophy of landscape preservation and social responsibility, which informed the early development of regional planning in this country. By contrast, the Charles River Basin (NRHP, 1978), which is also a component of the Metropolitan Park System, was a site for which Eliot proposed a dramatic

---

<sup>2</sup>Walter L. Creese, The Crowning of the American Landscape: Eight Great Spaces and Their Buildings (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 168

<sup>3</sup>Norman Newton, Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 559.

<sup>4</sup>The reservation is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as an early example of regional environmental planning (criterion A). It is also listed under criterion C for its design by nationally renowned landscape architect, Charles Eliot and for its collection of companion structures by Boston architect William D. Austin.

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 14**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

landscape reclamation which was not completed until well after his death through plans developed by others.<sup>5</sup>

Prior to its acquisition as a public reservation under the Metropolitan Park System, Revere Beach had lost much of its natural beauty to haphazard development. Formerly known as Chelsea Beach, Revere Beach began its transformation into a seaside resort as early as 1839 when the Eastern Railroad was built north from Boston. Hotels, summer cottages and businesses were built at the beach to accommodate vacationers and sightseers arriving from the city. In 1875, construction of a narrow gauge railroad line by the Boston, Revere Beach and Lynn Railway Company along the crest of the beach further stimulated commercial exploitation. Steamship service also brought visitors to the beach, disembarking at the 1,700-foot-long Great Ocean Pier located at the south end of the beach. The location of the railroad and the pier encouraged the establishment of a wide variety of privately owned bath houses, hotels, restaurants, dance halls, saloons and amusement parks, many of which were built seaward of the railroad on the beach itself. Photographs of Revere Beach and watercolor drawings by Boston artist Maurice Prendergast from the early 1890s show a jumble of shoddily built structures reaching down to the high tide line, obscuring the gracious natural curve of the beach and obstructing access to the ocean.

Developments at Revere Beach were mirrored by similar exploitation of the natural landscape throughout the Boston metropolitan area, as scenic hilltops, tidal estuaries, river corridors and woodland wilderness began to disappear.<sup>6</sup> Sections of the oceanfront at Nahant, north of Revere Beach or at Nantasket Beach, south of Boston, were similarly exploited with private, tawdry attractions for day-trippers from the city. The need to preserve open space and park land prompted men such as Charles Eliot, the young landscape architect, and Sylvester Baxter, an influential journalist from Malden, to encourage regional solutions to the unbridled pressures of commercial speculation and residential expansion in eastern Massachusetts.<sup>7</sup>

Charles Eliot was the son of Harvard University president Charles W. Eliot and a man with a new vision for the preservation and management of the public landscape.<sup>8</sup> As a young boy, he had spent many hours exploring the still open landscape throughout the Boston basin. While a student at Harvard, he formed a group of fellow undergraduates, called the Champlain Society,

---

<sup>5</sup>The National Register nomination for Revere Beach claimed that the Charles River Reservation and Revere Beach were ‘the crowning achievements of his (Eliot’s) short but influential career,’ but only Revere Beach can be seen as uniquely Eliot’s design.

<sup>6</sup>For a brief overview of the development of the Metropolitan Park Commission, see Norman Newton, “Charles Eliot and His Metropolitan Park System,” in Design on the Land, 318-336.

<sup>7</sup>For information on the contributions of Sylvester Baxter to the development of metropolitan planning in Greater Boston, see Cynthia Zaitzevsky, Frederick Law Olmsted and the Boston Park System, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982), 122-123.

<sup>8</sup>The basic source for information on Charles Eliot is the biography and anthology of his publications, written and edited by his father, Charles W. Eliot: Charles Eliot, Landscape Architect (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1902). In 1999, the Library of American Landscape Architecture and the University of Massachusetts Press published a new facsimile edition of this important volume with an introductory essay by Keith N. Morgan. Hereafter, quotations from this volume will be abbreviated as CELA.

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 15**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

to spend their summers recording the natural history of Mount Desert Island in Maine. With his father and brother, he sailed along the New England coast in the summers, honing his abilities at landscape analysis. (Eliot was motivated by his personal access to the Atlantic Ocean during summers in Maine when he chose Revere Beach as a site the general public could enjoy, especially the working class residents living in or near Revere). After graduating from Harvard, he attempted to train himself for a career in landscape architecture at a time when no academic program yet existed. He took natural science courses at Harvard's Bussey Institute for nearly two years before accepting an unpaid internship in the Brookline, Massachusetts office of Frederick Law Olmsted, the dominant figure in American landscape design. After two years with Olmsted, Eliot traveled in the United States and Europe for nearly two years, reading in important libraries, visiting parks and gardens and meeting with the foremost practitioners of his chosen profession. In late 1886, he returned to Boston and established an independent practice as a landscape architect.

At Olmsted's urging, Eliot published articles on landscape architecture for both popular and professional journals, arguing for a broader campaign of landscape preservation. In 1890, Eliot urged the creation of a statewide private organization to hold lands of "uncommon beauty and more than usual refreshing power. . . for the use and enjoyment of the public." His writings and organizing efforts resulted in the establishment in 1891 of the Trustees of Public Reservations, the first regional conservation and historic preservation organization in the United States. The Trustees became a model for the later National Trust for Places of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty in Great Britain and ultimately for the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States. (The first property acquired by the Trustees of Public Reservations, Virginia Woods in Stoneham, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Spot Pond Archaeological District in 1992.)<sup>9</sup>

Encouraged by the creation of the Trustees, Eliot joined with Sylvester Baxter to promote the creation of a regional, public landscape authority for Greater Boston. A bill was passed in 1892 creating a temporary Metropolitan Park Commission to investigate the creation of a regional park system for the greater Boston area. Governor William Russell appointed the Metropolitan Park Commission in July 1892, with Charles Francis Adams as chairman. The commission promptly engaged the services of Eliot as landscape architect and Baxter as secretary. Throughout the fall of 1892, Eliot and Baxter led the commission on a series of ten one-day expeditions to visit potential sites within ten miles of Boston. Eliot, who was intimately familiar with the region's topography, suggested, in a letter to the chairman dated October 6, that the "scientific 'Park System' for a district such as ours"<sup>10</sup> should include five types of landscapes: ocean beaches; the shores and islands of Boston Harbor; the courses of the larger tidal estuaries; several substantial areas of forest reservation; and many small squares, playgrounds and parks within the cities. All but the last of these landscapes should be established by a new regional park authority.

---

<sup>9</sup>Charles Eliot, "The Waverley Oaks: A Plan for Their Preservation for the People," Garden and Forest (February 22, 1890), republished in CFLA, 316-319.

<sup>10</sup>Letter, Charles Eliot to Charles Francis Adams, 6 October 1892, Metropolitan Park Commission Archives, as quoted in CELA, 381.

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 16**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Following their exhaustive series of field trips, the commission presented a formal report to the Legislature in January 1893, in which it proposed the creation of a network of reservations around Boston that were distinctive for their natural scenery. In a section of the report titled “Report of the Landscape Architect,” Eliot set out a specific recommendation for each type of area he had earlier suggested for inclusion in the system. For the oceanfront, he suggested acquisition of Revere Beach from Winthrop to Point of Pines. Eliot characterized the “present condition of this fine beach as a disgrace.”<sup>11</sup> He condemned the railroads for their disregard of the public interest by exploiting the crest of the beach as a location that would enable them to attract passengers, resulting in overbuilding on the beach by businesses accommodating those visitors. He called for public control of Revere Beach to allow for an equitable rearrangement of property and to provide for free public access to the beach. Eliot admitted that this would be a difficult proposition, “the beach being the first that I know of to be set aside and governed by a public body for the enjoyment of the common.”<sup>12</sup>

Eliot concluded his report with a compelling plea to the Legislature:

*Viewing these pleasant scenes of healthful recreation, it is a delight to think that all is as it should be, that here at last is a section of the district where nature has supplied the people with the best sort of a park,-- an inalienable pleasure ground such as cannot be enclosed for private use, cannot be damaged, and cannot be improved.*<sup>13</sup>

The Legislature quickly passed an act creating the Metropolitan Park System under the control of a permanent Metropolitan Park Commission, which the governor signed into law on June 3, 1893. This Metropolitan Park Commission thus became the first regional landscape planning public authority in the world and a model for future developments in the United States and abroad. Earlier that year, Eliot had joined in partnership with the landscape architecture firm of Frederick Law Olmsted and his stepson and nephew, John Charles Olmsted, to form Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot. With the formal organization of the new Metropolitan Park Commission, the firm became its official advisor but oversight of all work on the new park system remained Eliot’s responsibility.

In December 1893, Eliot set down a preliminary proposal for the public reservation at Revere Beach. Preservation of the natural curve of the beach was his greatest concern, and he was adamant in his demand that the private development that would inevitably face the whole length of the beach “should be compelled to conform with exactness to this long and grand sweep.”<sup>14</sup> He

---

<sup>11</sup>Charles Eliot, “ Report of the Landscape Architect,” The Metropolitan Park Commission Report (1892), as quoted in CELA, 411.

<sup>12</sup>Charles Eliot to Sylvester Baxter, 23 January 1897, Metropolitan Park Commission Archives as cited in CELA, 377.

<sup>13</sup>Charles Eliot, “Report to the Metropolitan Park Commission,” 23 January 1893, as quoted in CELA, 410.

<sup>14</sup>Charles Eliot, “Report to the Metropolitan Park Commission,” 15 December 1893, republished in CELA, 435-436. While this early report emphasizes the importance of the uninterrupted crescent of the beach, this particular quotation, which states the issue more succinctly and eloquently is taken from Charles Eliot, “Report of the Landscape Architect,” Metropolitan Park Commission Report (1896), as quoted in CELA, 535.



**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 17**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

recommended removal of the railroad from the crest of the beach and of all buildings between the railroad and the sea. The western boundary of the new reservation should extend beyond the old railroad right-of-way along a uniform line paralleling the curve of the beach. Enough additional land should be included leeward of the crest to ensure sufficient space for future improvements within the reservation without encroaching upon the beach, but not so much as to require too great an immediate expense. Such improvements would, in Eliot's mind, include a twenty-foot-wide promenade along the crest of the beach, a driveway of at least forty feet in width, and an ample sidewalk adjacent to the abutting private land. Eliot also proposed a circle at the southern end of the beach to serve as a common terminus of the existing highways that led to the beach from Boston and Winthrop and of the prospective western highways that would "some day bring thousands to the beach."<sup>15</sup>

Although the Metropolitan Park Commission had begun to acquire land for the new park system immediately upon its creation in June 1893, acquisition of Revere Beach was postponed until 1895. Fulfillment of Eliot's design for Revere Beach required the relocation not only of the railroad but also the removal of 103 privately owned structures, including 81 on the beach. As the temporary commission had noted in its report of 1893, disentangling the complex and irregular property lines on Revere Beach would be a complicated task. In the meantime, the Metropolitan Park Commission acquired nearly 7,000 acres of land elsewhere in the region prior to 1895, including Beaver Brook and Waverley Oaks in Belmont and Waltham, most of the large forest reservations at Blue Hills to the south of Boston and Middlesex Fells to the north, and Stony Brook in Boston proper. Acquisitions along the Charles River would also begin in 1895, complementing efforts by the Cambridge Park Commission, for which Eliot also served as landscape architect.

The temporary Metropolitan Park Commission had estimated that acquisition and initial development of Revere Beach would require an appropriation of \$1,000,000. For relocation of the Boston, Revere Beach and Lynn Railroad line to a point west of the crest of the beach \$300,000 was required. The construction of a boulevard along the vacated railroad right-of-way would cost \$125,000. The removal of the existing private structures on the beach was estimated to require \$500,000. An additional \$75,000 to cover under estimates and unexpected contingencies was added to the budget. The Legislature appropriated an initial \$500,000 for Revere Beach in 1894 and the remaining \$500,000 in January 1895. Work began immediately on the acquisition and demolition of the existing structures and on removal of the railroad; the beach opened to the public with temporary improvements in July 1895. Because of opposition from landowners, the extreme northern end of the beach, known as Point of Pines, was excluded from the acquisition. Instead, an approach to a crossing of the Saugus River was acquired behind Point of Pines, allowing the new drive along Revere Beach eventually to connect to a proposed parkway heading north to Lynn.

Eliot concentrated his efforts in 1896 on plans for further improvements to the reservation, which was fast becoming one of the most popular beach resorts in the metropolitan area. For the

---

<sup>15</sup>Charles Eliot, "Report of the Landscape Architect," Metropolitan Park Commission Report (1896), as cited in CELA, 536. Eliot specifically mentions that the crowds will come from Chelsea, Everett, Somerville and Maiden, working-class communities south and west of Revere.

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 18**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

comfort and convenience of the thousands of visitors to Revere Beach, Eliot proposed construction of a number of level terraces and long roofed shelters along the crest of the beach, seaward of the drive, as well as a bandstand for summer concerts. Such structures would be confined to narrow bastions built out from the edge of the promenade to a width of no more than sixty feet and would be held in place by poured concrete sea walls. Eliot recommended that larger shelters be built near the railroad stations and the termini of the electric street car lines, one at Revere Street and one at Beach Street, and that smaller shelters be built near the southern and northern circles at the extreme ends of the reservation.

The siting of a bathhouse, however, became the main priority for the reservation in 1896. Noting the overwhelming popularity of the beach, Eliot recommended that at least 1,000 dressing rooms should be provided at once, and that the dressing rooms should be attached to an administration building for the reservation. The commission at first insisted that any bathing facility should be built near the mid-point of the beach seaward of the boulevard, primarily to ensure the bathers' modesty as they entered the beach from the bathhouse in their bathing attire. Yet Eliot viewed the construction of such a large building on the crest of the beach as an affront to his grand design. He preferred that the bathhouse be relegated to the leeward side of the boulevard. In November, he argued his point to the commission from a philosophical position:

*What was it that the metropolitan district sought to secure when it purchased this costly sea-coast reservation? It was the grand and refreshing sight of the natural sea beach, with its long, simple curve, and its open view of the ocean. Nothing in the world presents a more striking contrast to the jumbled, noisy scenery of a great town; and this being the case, it seems to us that to place buildings on the beach is consciously to sacrifice the most refreshing characteristic of a sea-beach, and the most valuable element to the people is property therein.<sup>16</sup>*

In December, he argued a more practical point:

*Construction outward from the promenade flies in the face of nature, which demands all the available space for the harmless running up of storm waves. Retaining and foundation walls built seaward will receive the blows of the waves, buildings reared upon them will often be soused with spray, plazas thus constructed will be drenched when the waves are high. Structures of any kind in such a position will be a source of anxiety, if not of expense for repairs and reinforcements.<sup>17</sup>*

Eliot also maintained that a large building sited on the beach also would appear cramped and architecturally awkward jammed against the promenade; it would be conspicuously obtrusive from the drive and promenade, and it would induce congestion upon itself at the narrowest point of the beach. On Christmas Eve, Eliot noted with satisfaction in his diary that the "Board adopted new scheme for [bath] house in rear of driveway."<sup>18</sup> His father, Charles W. Eliot, the president of Harvard College and later the biographer of his son, noted:

---

<sup>16</sup>Charles Eliot, Letter to the Metropolitan Park Commission, 21 November 1896, as quoted in CELA, 676-677.

<sup>17</sup>Charles Eliot, Letter to the Metropolitan Park Commission, 3 December 1896, cited in CELA, 677.

<sup>18</sup>Charles Eliot Diary, 24 December 1896, cited in CELA, 678.

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 19**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

*In the whole course of Metropolitan Park business, no event gave Charles more satisfaction than this ultimate agreement to preserve the crest of Revere Beach from the intrusion of buildings; and, it may be added, no determination of the Commission has ever been more promptly or more completely justified.<sup>19</sup>*

The commission had been convinced that the curve of the crest of the beach should not be interrupted by buildings projecting onto the beach. Soon after his victory with the Park Commission, Charles Eliot died of spinal meningitis in March 1897. Throughout his brief service with the Metropolitan Park Commission, he had been frustrated by the unwillingness of the commissioners to pay for the development of general plans for the future of the parks. In 1898, the Metropolitan Park Commission published posthumously Eliot's Vegetation and Scenery in the Metropolitan Reservations of Boston, a guide for the development and management of the woodland reservations of the new park system. By contrast, Revere Beach was an important exception to this pattern, a site where Eliot developed comprehensive plans that were partially executed during his life and faithfully followed after his death.

William D. Austin, who had been hired as project architect by the commission in November 1896, was a staunch supporter of Eliot's plan and designed the architecture of Revere Beach Reservation to meet Eliot's general specifications. Austin (1856-1944), who worked out of the Boston office of his partnership with Frederick Stickney of Lowell, appears to have concentrated primarily on residential and school design prior to his work with the Metropolitan Park Commission. Austin's success at Revere Beach led to other commissions for both the Metropolitan Park Commission and the Boston Park Commission, including public buildings, such as the Lion House and Bird House at Franklin Park Zoo (NRHP, 1971) and the original administration building for the East Boston Airport (now Logan Airport).

Austin began his plans for the Bathhouse in early 1897, and the building was completed and open in time for the summer season. The building had a distinctly Renaissance Revival design, evoking a Mediterranean flavor for this seaside reservation. The central administration building was of brick with terra-cotta trim, two stories in height on the beachfront, with an additional basement story in the rear. It was 80 feet in length and 75 feet in depth and was covered by a massive square hipped roof covered with terra cotta tile and surmounted by a monumental dome-shaped cupola. The building was ten bays across and entered off the boulevard through three arched doorways. At either side of the administration building were the yards in which the dressing rooms were located. These yards were open to the air and were enclosed on the beachfront and at the ends by high brick walls. Adjacent there were bicycle storage sheds equipped for the storage of 1,225 bicycles. There were 602 men's dressing rooms in the yard to the right of the administration building and 402 women's dressing rooms to the left.

Plans for the Bathhouse also included designs for the erection of three pairs of shelter buildings, now known as pavilions, on the seaward side of the boulevard. One of those pairs was located directly in front of the Bathhouse, furnishing an opportunity for the public to view the bathing. The Bathhouse Pavilions, as this surviving pair is still known, also provided a terminus for a pair of tunnels leading out of either of the dressing room yards and under the boulevard for entry by the bathers directly onto the beach. Regulations forbade bathers to cross the boulevard in their bathing attire. A post clock was placed in between the two shelters, one face toward the Bathhouse, the other toward the beach, to remind bathers when it was time to return their rented bathing suits after two hours.

Another pair of shelters was placed at the site of the old Strathmore Hotel, between Beach Street and Shirley Avenue, near the southern end of the boulevard. It is slightly smaller than the

---

<sup>19</sup>CELA, 678.

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 20**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Bathhouse shelters, but a bandstand was placed between the two. A third pair of shelters was planned for a space opposite Revere Street, to the north of the Bathhouse, but it was not built because of insufficient funds. This pair and a fourth pair farther north at Oak Island Street were built to Austin's design in 1905.

The Bathhouse, which had a wood infrastructure, burned in 1898. It was rebuilt in 1899 to its original specifications, with the addition of an iron roof structure. At the same time, Austin also designed plans for a police station located next to the Bathhouse directly north of the men's dressing yards. Each reservation in the Metropolitan Park System would have its own police force and a well-designed police station. The Revere Beach Police Station was designed in the Renaissance Revival style to complement the Bathhouse. Its most imposing feature is a sixty-two foot high tower providing spectacular views east to the ocean, south to Boston, and north and west to Revere, Lynn and the countryside. A large block-shaped wing was attached to the rear of the new police station to house a laundry and sewing facility. The Metropolitan Park Commission ensured its monopoly on bathing suits at Revere Beach. Not only were bathers required to rent their suits at the Bathhouse, but now the reservation could manufacture, repair and launder them as well.

Austin provided one final design for a building at Revere Beach in 1905: the Superintendent's Residence. By that time, the chief of police at each larger reservation also served as superintendent of park operations. Each superintendent was provided with a fine house on the reservation itself. At Revere Beach, the superintendent's residence was located at the southern edge of Southern Circle, now known as Eliot Circle, at the main entrance to the reservation. It too was designed in the Renaissance Revival style to complement further the Bath House and Police Station on the boulevard to its north. The superintendent was provided with spacious living quarters, a tree-shaded yard, two large side porches, and a fine view of the beach.

Revere Beach was one of the most popular seaside resorts in New England during the first decades of the twentieth century, attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors during the summer months. Private interests quickly invested in adjacent properties, building grand hotels and amusements on the west side of Revere Beach Boulevard. At various times, four large roller coasters, carousels with hand-carved horses five deep, and the mammoth Wonderland Amusement Park were all part of the beach environment.

After World War II, however, suburbanization and cuts in public spending led to a decline in the beach's popularity and deterioration of its infrastructure. The Bathhouse was demolished in 1962 and replaced at the same site with a more modern, purely functional new facility. This bathhouse was in turn demolished in the early 1990s. The decline culminated in 1978 with one of the most severe blizzards of the century, which wrought extensive damage to the beach, the pavilions and the bandstand. The reservation's fortunes began to turn in the early 1980s with the complete renovation of the police station, which stabilized the building and allowed for its continued use. Then in 1994, the Metropolitan District Commission undertook a major rehabilitation of the storm-damaged pavilions and bandstands, helping to restore the original grace of Eliot's landscape design and Austin's architecture. In recognition of this outstanding project, the Massachusetts Historical Commission presented the MDC with MHC's annual preservation award. Today, the Revere Beach Reservation retains a high degree of integrity, lacking only the bathhouse from the original work by Eliot and Austin. The uninterrupted stretch of a beautiful crescent beach remains a glory of the Metropolitan Park Commission patrimony.

On October 28, 1893, Frederick Law Olmsted, the dean of the American profession of landscape architecture, wrote the following comments to his two partners:

*Nothing else compares in importance with the Boston work, meaning the Metropolitan quite equally with the city work. The two together will be the most important work in our profession now in hand anywhere in the world. In our*

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 21**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

*probably lifetime, Muddy River, Blue Hills, the Fells, Waverley Oaks, Charles River and the Beaches will be points to date from in the history of American Landscape Architecture, as much as Central Park. They will be the opening of new chapters in the art.*<sup>20</sup>

Of this list, only Central Park and Muddy River were the work of Frederick Law Olmsted. The Blue Hills, the Middlesex Fells, Waverley Oaks, the Charles River and Revere Beach were projects that Eliot oversaw for the new Metropolitan Park Commission. As previously stated, Revere Beach was the one reservation that he was able to shape significantly before his early death and which was executed closely following his recommendations. In 1905 after the completion of Eliot's landscape scheme and William Austin's architectural embellishments, the British novelist H. G. Wells visited Revere Beach and other elements of the new Metropolitan Park system with Sylvester Baxter as his guide. The following year, Wells published The Future in America, in which his chapter entitled "Growth Invincible" concluded the following:

*If possible it is more impressive, even, than the crowded largeness of New York, to trace the serene preparation Boston has made through this (Metropolitan Park) Commission to be widely and easily vast. New York's humanity has the curious air of being carried along upon a wave of irresistible prosperity, but Boston confesses design. I suppose no city in all the world has ever produced so complete and ample a forecast of its own future as this commission's plan for Boston.*<sup>21</sup>

In its majestic sweep of sand and sea, Revere Beach still "confesses design," representing the national significance of Eliot's achievements, of this particular site and of the system of preserved landscapes of which it is such an important example.

### **Archaeological Resources**

Since patterns of prehistoric settlement and subsistence in Revere are poorly understood, any surviving sites could be significant. Prehistoric sites in this area can contribute information relating to coastal adaptation in the greater Boston area and the effects of sea level rise on these patterns. Prehistoric sites in the Revere Beach area may contain information that indicates the importance of estuarine barrier beach ecosystems to local and regional settlement and subsistence systems and the extent to which open water marine resources were also important to Native Americans. The apparent concentration of burials in the Revere Beach area also indicates the potential to recover information relating to Native American mortuary ceremonialism from sites in the area. Native burials documented in the area to date demonstrate the potential for studies of material culture not usually observed on most types of sites. These studies could yield information relating to lithic, ceramic and metallurgical technologies. Material culture studies could also provide insights into Native social systems, seasonality and symbolism.

Historic archaeological resources described above have the potential to document the evolution of an ocean beach area as it developed during the first half of the nineteenth-century under private ownership, and as it was reclaimed and redesigned in the late nineteenth-century as the first ocean beach in the United States acquired for public recreational use. Further documentary research combined with archaeological survey and testing can identify the locations of the many privately owned bath houses, hotels, restaurants, dance halls, saloons and amusement park facilities built in the Revere Beach locale while the area was under private ownership from circa 1839 to the 1890s. This information can document the extent to which this development was

---

<sup>20</sup>Frederick Law Olmsted to John Charles Olmsted and Charles Eliot. 28 October and 1 November, Olmsted Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>21</sup>H. G. Wells, The Future in America (New York: Harper & Row, 1906), 49

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 22**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

haphazard and typical of the exploitation of the natural coastal environment in the Boston area during the nineteenth-century. Detailed analysis of archaeological features associated with structures under private ownership compared with a similar analysis of features associated with structures under public ownership can contribute important information on the activities which occurred at the beach under each system and the extent to which they differed or were similar. This information may indicate the extent to which people or groups who used the beach changed over time. Information may also be present relating to nineteenth-century transportation technologies and their importance to recreational areas like Revere Beach. Evidence may survive from wharf and railroad facilities, both of which were important nineteenth-century modes of transportation to and from the beach area. Archaeological information may survive indicating the relative importance of these facilities and, other related enterprises important to their operation. Evidence may also be present to indicate the extent to which social conduct or norms for beach recreation have changed over the last 150 years. This type of information can be the result of content analysis of archaeological features or the study of structures like the tunnel and bathhouses that connected with the beach.

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 23**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

---

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Archives of the Metropolitan District Commission, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Boston, Massachusetts.

Charles Eliot Collection, Loeb Library, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Charles Eliot Correspondence and Diaries, private collection, Boston, Massachusetts. Charles W. Eliot Papers, Pusey Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Correspondence files, Frederick Law Olmsted Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

Creese, Walter L. The Crowning of the American Landscape: Eight Great Spaces and the Buildings. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.

(Eliot, Charles William). Charles Eliot. Landscape Architect. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1902; new edition, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press with the Library of American Landscape History, 1999, new introduction by Keith N. Morgan.

Massachusetts, Commonwealth of. House No. 150: Report of the Board of Metropolitan Park Commissioners, 1893.

\_\_\_\_\_. Board of Metropolitan Park Commissioners. Annual Reports, 1895, 1896, 1898, 1905.

Metropolitan District Commission, Parks Engineering and Construction Division. Restoration of Pavilions and Bandstand, Revere Beach Reservation (Contract P82-1079-DJA): Phase One Report. Unpublished report, January 12, 1987.

Morgan, Keith N. "Charles Eliot," in Charles Birnbaum and Robin Karson, eds., Pioneers of American Landscape Design. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000.

Morgan, Keith N. "Held in Trust: Charles Eliot's Vision for the New England Landscape," National Association of Olmsted Parks Workbook 1(1991).

Newton, Norman T. Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971.

Shrimpton, Jeffrey. Revere Beach National Register Historic District Nomination, June, 1998. The majority of this National Historic Landmark Report has been quoted verbatim from Jeffrey Shrimpton's fine National Register nomination.

---

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 24**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☒ Previously Listed in the National Register.
- ☐ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- ☐ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
- ☐ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
- ☐ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
  - ☐ Other State Agency
  - ☐ Federal Agency
  - ☐ Local Government
  - ☐ University
  - ☐ Other (Specify Repository):
-



**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 25**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Acreage of Property: 60 acres

UTM References:	Point	Zone	Easting	Northing
	A.	19	336210	4696150
	B.	19	336680	4696020
	C.	19	337050	4698910
	D.	19	337980	4699840

**Verbal Boundary Description:**

The boundary of this property is depicted by a dark line on the attached topographic map: Lynn, Massachusetts, 1:25,000-scale metric, 7.5 x 15 minute quadrangle (1985). From outside edge of the Northern Circle (now Carey Circle) parking area east to the Atlantic Ocean, heading south along the shoreline at mean high tide mark approximately three miles to Eliot Circle. North from outside edge of Eliot Circle along west side of Revere Beach Boulevard to southern boundary of the MDC Police Station. The boundary goes east to the western border of Revere Beach Boulevard, and then crosses west to Ocean Avenue, runs north along Ocean Ave, to northern boundary of MDC Police Station, and continues along the western border of Revere Beach Boulevard. North along east side Revere Beach Blvd to Northern Circle. The UTM coordinates above describe a polygon that encloses the boundary.

**Boundary Justification:**

The boundaries of Revere Beach Reservation Historic District were chosen to include all of Revere Beach east of Revere Beach Blvd. between Eliot Circle to the south and Northern Circle to the north. This is the extent of the beach acquired by the Metropolitan Park Commission in 1895 for inclusion in the original reservation according to Charles Eliot's original plan. The western side of the Boulevard was chosen as the western boundary of the district because the area west of this boundary has lost historic integrity over the years as a result of demolition, new construction, and transfer of property. One adjacent parcel is included in the district because it contains the MDC Police Station that was associated with the district during the 1895-1910 period of significance. This building was designed by William Austin, the original architect for the reservation. The parcel containing the Police Station is at 220 Revere Beach Blvd., on the west side of the street extending west to Ocean Ave., approximately one –and –one quarter miles north of Eliot Circle.

**REVERE BEACH RESERVATION****Page 26**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

---

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

Name/Title: Keith D. Morgan  
Professor of Art History

Address: 39 Benton Road  
Belmont, MA 02478

Telephone: 617-484-1172

Date: December 18, 2000

Edited by: John H. Sprinkle, Jr., Ph.D.  
National Park Service  
National Historic Landmarks Survey  
1849 C St., N.W.  
Room NC-400  
Washington, DC 20240

Telephone: (202) 354-2228

DESIGNATED A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS ON  
MAY 27, 2003

---